

Most of all, each film features a mother whose twisted values are embedded so deeply in her son that he unhesitatingly kills for her. The less intimidating mom is Mrs. Bates, who's safely dead except for the residue that looms over Norman's psychotic memory. By contrast, Eleanor is a dynamic presence, enabled by malicious scientists (the term "alienist" never rang more true) to work her will through a son in whom her incestuous hooks are inextricably sunk. When she describes the awesome political power she plans to grab, her fanaticism is so all-consuming it seems almost supernatural.

The Manchurian Candidate is a spellbinding film about spellbinding, with a doomed wayfarer (Raymond) held by an evil enchantress (Eleanor) so malignant that not even a persevering hero (Ben) can readily break the chains her pitch-black magic has forged. This theme unifies the film from the night-cloaked violence of the opening battlefield scene to the desolate final shot, where nature itself grieves with rain and thunder as Ben desolately chants, "Hell... Hell..."

Additional extras in the Criterion release include an audio commentary by Frankheimer, recycled from an earlier DVD edition, and an overwritten leaflet essay by critic Howard Hampton that smothers the film in adjectives. A brief video discussion with Frankheimer, Axelrod, and Sinatra gives the star a chance to show the permanently damaged finger he acquired while filming the karate scene, and there's a lively interview with Lansbury, who says she got to play Eleanor only after Frankheimer overcame Sinatra's preference for Lucille Ball, of all people. These supplements are interesting, but the valuable ones are Morris's slightly meandering lecture and Carruthers's illustrated overview of the Fifties brainwashing scare.

Like most films of the highest order, *The Manchurian Candidate* retains its bite many decades after its initial run. The politics of fear and the disease of McCarthyism haven't disappeared; Carruthers's descriptions of what Americans endured in Korean prison camps make me think instantly of Guantánamo Bay; and hidden persuaders still plug away at conditioning us to brutality, dishonesty, and exploitation. Frankheimer's film probes enduring social pathologies by drawing out the contrasts between two very different paranoid styles: Raymond's poisonous paranoia, which takes him to the verge of crucial self-knowledge but ultimately fails to save his mind or soul, and Ben's productive paranoia, which leads him to justified suspicions and constructive actions that avert a national catastrophe at a devastating personal cost. Smart, suspenseful, and gripping, *The Manchurian Candidate* is a great deal more than *Psycho* with politics.

—David Sterritt

Kijû Yoshida: Love + Anarchism

A Blu-ray box set including *Eros Plus Massacre*: Produced by Kijû Yoshida and Shinji Soshizaki; directed by Kijû Yoshida; screenplay by Masahiro Yamada and Kijû Yoshida; cinematography by Motokichi Hasegawa; edited by Hiroyuki Yasuoka; music by Toshi Ichianagi; starring Mariko Okada, Toshiyuki Hosokawa, Yûko Kusunoki, Toshiko Li, and Dajirô Harada. All-regions Blu-ray and DVD, B&W, Japanese dialogue with optional English subtitles, director's cut, 220 min.; and theatrical version, 169 min., 1969.

***Heroic Purgatory*: Produced by Kijû Yoshida and Sei Okumura; directed by Kijû Yoshida; screenplay by Masahiro Yamada and Kijû Yoshida; cinematography by Motokichi Hasegawa; edited by Hiroyuki Yasuoka; music by Toshi Ichianagi; starring Mariko Okada, Kaizô Kamoda, Naho Kimura, Yoshiaki Makita, and Kaneko Iwasaki. All-regions Blu-ray and DVD, B&W, Japanese dialogue with optional English subtitles, 118 min., 1970.**

***Coup d'état*: Produced by Mariko Okada, Kôshi Ueno, and Kinshirô Kuzui; directed by Kijû Yoshida; screenplay by Minoru Betsuyaku; cinematography by Motokichi Hasegawa; editing by Yoshiki Oka; music by Toshi Ichianagi; starring Rentarô Mikuni, Yasuyo Matsumura, Yasuo Miyake, and Akiko Kurano. All-regions Blu-ray and DVD, B&W, Japanese dialogue with optional English subtitles, 110 min., 1973. An Arrow Films release, www.arrowfilms.co.uk.**

Daunting, exasperating and, in the end, greatly rewarding, Arrow Academy's *Kijû Yoshida: Love + Anarchism* is not for slackers. The box set is a comprehensive tribute to—and exegesis of—the "political trilogy" of Kijû Yoshida (aka Yoshida Yoshishige): *Eros Plus Massacre* (1969; presented in both

the nearly four-hour "director's cut" and the nearly three-hour "theatrical version"), *Heroic Purgatory* (1970), and *Coup d'état* (1973). A proper appreciation of these complex, occasionally opaque, modernist films requires, in theory, a thoroughgoing knowledge of such disparate concerns as aesthetic tendencies within the Japanese New Wave; the contradictions of Japanese leftism, whether anarchist-inspired or inflected by the authoritarian tenor of the Communist Party; the role of sexual politics within both Japanese anarchism of the early twentieth century and the Tokyo-based student New Left of the 1960s; strange parallels between the radical left and the "revolutionary," pro-Emperor right of the 1930s; as well as the relationship of the films to innovations pioneered by Western modernist directors like Alain Resnais and Jean-Luc Godard.

Of course, it's perfectly possible to enjoy the films without immersing oneself in the voluminous scholarly literature surrounding these topics. Still, Yoshida's brilliant, if intermittently baffling, evocations of the Japanese past reinforce how representing history onscreen is often inextricable from a concrete aesthetic agenda. To be sure, the commentaries on the discs by David Desser, the leading English-speaking Yoshida scholar and the author of a book entitled *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema*, constitute a useful guide for the perplexed since his focus on selected pivotal scenes succinctly explains the cultural context that undergirds Yoshida's aesthetic agenda.

The two versions of *Eros Plus Massacre*, usually deemed Yoshida's masterpiece, constitute the trilogy's centerpiece. The film, particularly in the light of the nuances in the contrasting versions, provides a fascinating case study in how the conventions of the "historical film" prove infinitely pliable in the hands of a director entranced with non-linear narratives, disjunctive editing, and the



Masaoka Itsuko (Yuko Kusunoki) prepares to stab her lover, Japanese anarchist and free-love advocate Sakae Osugu (Toshiyuki Hosokawa) in Kijû Yoshida's *Eros Plus Massacre* (1969).



Heroic Purgatory (1970) criticizes the Stalinist tendencies of the Japanese Communist Party.

deployment of a highly stylized mise en scène. *Eros Plus Massacre* juxtaposes vignettes from two generations of Japanese leftists. A considerable chunk of screen time is devoted to the Taisho era (the years covered in the Taisho interludes span from 1916 to 1923) and the coterie around the individualist anarchist Sakae Osugi, a theorist who, according to his biographer Thomas A. Stanley, espoused an odd mixture of collectivism, syndicalism, and anarcho-individualism. Osugi also appropriated, with occasionally disastrous results, the Western doctrine of “free love.” The film continually blurs the boundaries between Osugi’s brand of libidinal politics and the escapades of Eiko and Wada, late-twentieth-century fictional descendants of the Taisho anarchist milieu. Exemplifying the sexual experimentation associated with the Japanese New Left of the late Sixties, Eiko, a student and part-time prostitute, and Wada, a young man scarred by childhood abuse, hold a funhouse mirror up to the foibles of their antiauthoritarian precursors.

In many respects, Osugi exemplifies the most extreme tendencies of what Murray Bookchin once denounced as “lifestyle anarchism.” Although Osugi is usually considered the leading Japanese anarchist of his era—a dissident who served four terms in prison—Yoshida is primarily concerned with this charismatic nonconformist’s desire to placate his wife while juggling romantic relationships with two mistresses—the journalist Kamichika Ichiko (renamed Masaoka Itsuko in the film) and the feminist firebrand Noe Ito. This personal imbroglio is anchored in two historical incidents that define some of the contradictions of Osugi’s radicalism. The first of these catalytic events is the so-called Hayama Incident, a benign

name for Kamichika’s failed attempt to murder her wayward lover. Curiously enough, this event is, for Yoshida, more crucial than the second incident—the eventual execution of Osugi, his nephew, and Ito by the military police in 1923.

The film’s audacity resides in its resistance to depicting Osugi and his restive harem and the denizens of the modern framing story as autonomous individuals entrenched in two distinct historical epochs. A loosening of temporal boundaries allows the Taisho protagonists to enter the modern era and function as specters within a radical

milieu influenced by their doctrines. Eiko hangs out with an aspiring filmmaker and is fascinated by the legacy of Osugi and Noe Ito. From this vantage point, it’s arguable that all of the Taisho sequences are, as Desser suggests, actually filtered through Eiko’s tortured mindset. Yet, if one agrees with Vladimir Nabokov’s assertion that, at least in an aesthetic context, the word “reality” should always be accompanied by quotation marks, this interpretation is nothing but a provisional, disposable hypothesis.

For Yoshida, history is not preserved in amber but is a fluid preoccupation that constantly imposes itself on the present. Several bravura set pieces crystallize *Eros Plus Massacre*’s interrogation of history and its deployment of playful aesthetic distancing. A scene in which Noe Ito emerges from her Taisho milieu and takes a streamlined bullet train to the bustling Tokyo of the late Sixties drives home the affinities between the two eras. A virtuosic sequence towards the end of the film, which foregrounds three different visions of Itsuko’s jealous assault on the hapless Osugi, is even more impressive. The initial re-enactment of the stabbing adheres more or less to the historical record and is noteworthy for highlighting a series of cascading *shoji* screens as the attack progresses.

The second and third reimaginings of the event are more concerned with the psychologically deep structure of history than the literal record. In the second variant, Osugi guides the knife to his own body, making us wonder if he welcomes the attack and is implicitly masochistic. The third version replaces Itsuko with Ito and perhaps implies that the stabbing is perhaps not merely engendered by jealous rage but is also a



Right-wing nationalist Ikki Kita (Rentaro Mikuni) has a troubled relationship with his wife (Yasuyo Matsumura) in *Coup d'Etat* (1973).

product of Osugi's male hubris. In other words, even if Noe Ito was not the woman who historically wielded the knife, it makes sense that she would harbor equally ill feelings (both Ito and Kamichika wrote for the influential feminist journal *Bluestocking*) toward a lover whose hostility to conventional sexual morality is merely a facile rationale for male arrogance.

Those lucky enough to snag a copy of the Arrow box set will have the opportunity to assess the relative merits of the leisurely director's cut and the equally—if not more—challenging shorter theatrical version. Shortly after Yoshida screened his cut for Kamichika in the late Sixties, she sued him on the grounds of “invasion of privacy.” Having become a respectable member of the Diet, the Japanese Parliament, she apparently had little desire to relive her radical past. Faced with this formidable obstacle, Yoshida gave Kamichika a fictional name and refashioned the film to slightly de-emphasize her role. (In any case, despite the focus on Kamichika's rage toward Osugi, Noe Ito, superbly portrayed by Yoshida's wife Mariko Okada, emerges as the film's most vital and dynamic female character.) Despite the constraints imposed upon Yoshida by Kamichika's displeasure with her portrayal, many commentators, paradoxically enough, prefer the theatrical version to the somewhat more historically detailed director's cut. The narrative lacunae ordained by the editing process results in an even more vertiginous plot structure—a bit less legible perhaps but more in keeping with Yoshida's modernist agenda. Both versions benefit from cinematographer Motokichi Hasegawa's masterful black-and-white CinemaScope compositions.

While *Eros Plus Massacre* is something of a cinephilic Everest that every filmgoer should attempt to climb, *Heroic Purgatory* and *Coup d'état* (the film's Japanese title is *Martial Law*) are less seminal, if nevertheless fascinating, films. Even a Yoshida enthusiast such as Desser seems at a loss for words when summing up *Heroic Purgatory*. In his book, he describes the film as “baffling” and his Arrow commentary on selected scenes from the film refers to it as “murky.” A classic example of the “puzzle film,” *Heroic Purgatory* begins with a series of convoluted familial entanglements: a young woman adrift in Cold War Japan returns to her presumed family while the identity of her actual father remains in doubt.

This scenario eventually morphs into a powerful, if confusing, indictment of the authoritarianism of the Japanese Communist Party; much of the film is preoccupied with interrogations of supposed traitors and renegades that resemble the Moscow Trials of the 1930s. Historical eras coalesce into one another in such an intricate fashion that a head scratcher such as Resnais's *Muriel* seems relatively simple; at least *Muriel*'s enigmas can be logically disentangled after

multiple viewings. The leftist outrage at the terms of the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty (formally known as the Treaty of Mutual Security between the United States and Japan, usually abbreviated as the ANPO Treaty) from the Fifties through the Seventies fuels the protagonists' militancy. But the cause of anti-imperialism notwithstanding, the doomed party hacks are eventually consumed by the same paranoia and lethal backbiting that suffuses Nagisa Oshima's similarly disillusioned *Night and Fog in Japan* (1960).

Like *Eros Plus Massacre*, *Coup d'état* depicts the foibles of an actual historical personage. While it bears little resemblance to a conventional biopic, Yoshida's tight focus on the motivations of Ikki Kita, a right-wing political theorist who helped promote an attempted coup d'état on February 26, 1936, is, despite the director's characteristic ellipses, easier to follow than *Heroic Purgatory*. A former leftist, Kita refers to himself and his allies as revolutionaries and subscribes to the notion that right-wing rebels should do their utmost to encourage the Emperor to impose marital law. As was true of European fascists, Kita is a proponent of what Erich Fromm once termed an “escape from freedom”—a backward-looking retreat into a reactionary conception of liberation as repression. A large part of the film's effectiveness derives from the brilliant performance as Kita by Rentarô Mikuni's (also known for his appearances in films by, among others, Ichikawa and Kobayashi). Much of the narrative is bound up with Kita's influence on a character only identified as the “young soldier,” a Kita disciple whose radical patriotic fervor anticipates, as Desser insightfully points out, the obsessions of Yukio Mishima, the celebrated novelist and twentieth-century right-wing radical.

Despite his emphasis on quintessentially Japanese themes, Yoshida's concerns can be easily discussed in tandem with the linkage of sexual politics and antistatist leftism that also surfaces in European films of the same period such as Dusan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) and Zelig Zilnik's *Early Works* (1969). Like those filmmakers, Yoshida is more preoccupied with political defeats than victories. The leading characters are usually dynamic, flawed anti-heroes. These films might be dismissed as pessimistic, but isn't pessimism merely a form of realism as we look back at the macabre events of the twentieth century and contemplate the additional atrocities of the twenty-first? Yoshida's films are often labeled “dialectical.” Yet the rubric “dialectical” implies a nominally Hegelian-Marxist view of history as a progressive force oriented toward a concrete, liberating goal. In Yoshida's universe of discourse, history, for better or worse, doesn't appear to have an intrinsic purpose; it just impersonates a stumbling drunk taking us all on a collision course toward oblivion.—Richard Porton

Only Angels Have Wings

Produced and directed by Howard Hawks; screenplay by Jules Furthman; cinematography by Joseph Walker; edited by Viola Lawrence; aerial photography by Elmer Dyer; special effects by Roy Davidson; music by Dimitri Tiomkin; starring Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, Richard Barthelmess, Rita Hayworth, Thomas Mitchell, and Noah Beery Jr. Blu-ray and DVD, B&W, 121 min., 1939. A Criterion Collection release, www.criterion.com.

Howard Hawks's *Only Angels Have Wings* had been, until recent years, one of Hollywood's most neglected gems. It was edged out of the spotlight in its initial 1939 theatrical release by the long shadow of Hollywood's self-proclaimed “Greatest Year in American Films” that included such classics as Victor Fleming's one-two punch *Gone With the Wind* (co-directed by an uncredited George Cukor) and *The Wizard of Oz*; Ernst Lubitsch's *Ninotchka*; Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*; Edmund Goulding's *Dark Victory*; Leo McCarey's *Love Affair*; John Ford's *Stagecoach*; Lewis Milestone's *Of Mice and Men*; William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights*; and George Stevens's *Gunga Din*. *Only Angels Have Wings* is easily as good as any of them and arguably better than most.

Cary Grant plays Geoff Carter, the tough-guy boss of a hard-boiled bunch of fliers working for the Barranca Airways Company, an aerial mail-delivery service in the fictional South American city near a treacherous pass through the Andes Mountains. As in all Hollywood films of the time,



Cary Grant in Howard Hawks's *Only Angels Have Wings* (photo courtesy of Photofest).